

EL HIJO DEL SANTO VS REY MISTERIO JR! LIGER/BENOIT VS OHTANI/TAKAIWA!
CHIGUSA VS OZ! MISAWA VS KAWADA! Damn what a good week and other stuff!!

Howdy!

WELCOME TO DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #33!

It's been a nigh perfect week of wrestling viewing, as Glenn Delivered, as usual, BIG TIME on the CHOICE Chigusa/OZ match and the CHOICE Misawa/Kawada hacked up match and I saw the Misterio/Del Santo card and Liger/Muta (ROBBBBB!!!!Where the hell have you been!). Add to that assorted other anomalies and kick ass matches here and there and you have Dean's perfect viewing week!

PRO AZTECA- 2/21/97 Tijuana - This was the Ron Rivera version I think because the whole card was on it and the camera was in a traditional setting (I don't think Dams has this on his page, so I don't think this was one of his). Golly! El HIJO DEL SANTO vs REY MISTERIO JR is about as perfect a lucha match as you are gonna get. It followed the EMLL traditional pattern but, involving who it was involving, it took each to the Nth degree. The first Caida was about the finest display a truly GRACEFUL lucha mat wrestling you're gonna find- not stiff by any means, but still quick, exact and beautifully elaborate. Steeped with tradition, it recounted the best spots that Santo and Casas had in their classics and added the embellishments to those spots that Rey and JUVENTUD had added to the mirror spots and what have you in their classic feud. Early on, they threaten to "Konan" the match with a bunch of Misterioso/Misterio angle crap, but luckily, he is sent to the back and the match was left in pristine condition (maybe they should show this match to the person who booked that motherfu*kin Benoit/Malenko match.) The Segunda Caida was the highflying fall and it avoided overly gaudy displays that made the Psicosis feud with Rey the Spectacular over-the-top tour-de-force that it was- but the same thing would have been way out of place in this exercise in the roots of Lucha Libre. Both stayed very low impact, but the death-defying, state-of-the-art highspots were replaced by super fast in-ring ranas and armdrags and it built to a logical conclusion to the second caida. The third Caida was a different animal all-together, and HERE IS WHERE REY MISTERIO JR IS SHOWING THAT HE IS THE REAL DEAL WHEN IT COMES TO PRO WRESTLING- a certain someone (You know who you are!:) was commenting that the cool thing about this match was the purity of the lucha libre, in that it avoided going into the other influences that are currently shaping the better wrestlers in Lucha right now- be it ECW or the New Japan Junior Heavyweight style. I'll agree 200% (YESSS!) with this for the first two falls but the third fall transforms into pure All Japan Lucha Libre with the Kenta Misterio Jr trying to avoid Mitsuhara del Santo's Camel Clutch '85. THIS WAS CHOICE and took this beyond what a usual Lucha match serves up, in that Lucha can have DEEP psychology but not in this direction; this was pure Puroresu. By the end Rey has nothing else to offer in terms of beating the Master and all he can do is delay the inevitable. This is a Truly beautiful match. Get ahold of it.

Other matches on this tape are as hit and miss as one has come to expect from the Tijuana brand of wrestling. The Pandilleros match isn't..... very..... good. There is exactly ONE good move in the whole deal and it was an out-of-ring armdrag that PANDY two did on FOBIA- who

was totally wasted in this match-up. Don't even ask about how bad the Los Brujos match was. On the upside, the SUPER CALO/THUNDERBIRD/MAGICA/JUNGLA vs JUVENTUD GUERRERRA/HALLOWEEN/DAMIAN 666/EI HIJO DEL ENFERMO was about as fun as a match can get. This was super goofy with the greatest, most-extended goofball everybody-misses-everthing sequence that led DIRECTLY into one of those fantabulous ten-man bizarro running of the ropes which went DIRECTLY into the delayed QUADRUPLE TOPE SUICIDA that kicked my ass with manly goodness. JUVENTUD ruled it like a fucking GOD and Jungla was subdued but did the best tope. DAMIEN was KILLING me when he was dancing like Super Calo. Super Calo and a Valet do some kind of forbidden dance at the end until Juventud can't stand it anymore and storms the ring. It was REALLY CHOICE!

The KONAN/LaPARKA/Torrero vs Cien Caras/Psicosis/Misterioso was all heat and no action, though LaParka and Psicosis did some nice things between the posing and comedy stuff and what have you. Misterioso has to be the most deteriorated wrestler on earth. I actually believe Cien Caras outworked him in this one.

NEW JAPAN TV-3/29/97 (GLENNN!!!!!!)

-The highlight of this batch of New Japan was the CHRIS BENOIT/JUSHIN THUNDER LIGER vs TAKAIWA/SHINJIRO OHTANI match which was stiff, intense, fabulous. Ohtani tried to be surly with varying degrees of success- in that you can only be so surly when in with original surly bastard- the new super-psychotic Chris Benoit. Liger is freakin AWESOME in this- beating the crap out of Takaiwa and Ohtani-Killing Ohtani for good measure. They seemed to be positioning Benoit to feud with Takaiwa (hopefully when Takaiwa, Ohtani and KANEMOTO join Kaientai Deluxe and the old guys throw in with Sasuke. HOPE! HOPE! HOPE!!) Takaiwa is improving by leaps and bounds (or he is wrestling the two best wrestlers in the world or both, I dunno.:)) Liger hits the most beautiful running Ligerbomb of the year, Ohtani hits the best missile-enzuigiri so far this year, Benoit is Benoit and it's all as great as all the other NJ JH matches from this feud. Between this and the Big Deluxe feud, it's already been a VERY banner year for wrestling.

The Faces of Fear/Regal vs Hashimoto and the boys wasn't as good as it should have been because Hash never really kicked the hell out of Meng like I was hoping and Regal got to do absolutely nothing.

ALL JAPAN TV- 3/30/97

-Kawada vs Misawa from Carny was pretty great. It differed from the last futile attempt by Kawada to beat the Man, in that Misawa is kicking Yellow Boot Boy's hinder by the end here as opposed to last time when Kawada was stomping Misawa's ass into the ground and Misawa was saved by the bell. In this one, Kawada mounts some TRULY impressive offense with just SUPER dickish kicks to the head- including a truly hideous backwards somersault kick right in Mitsuhashi's stoic mush. Misawa returns the favor with Standing, Forward-Rolling-Guillotine-Enzuigiri that was about as skull-crushing as humanly possible. Only one spinal-chord threatening throw and I'm assuming that Kawada will finally beat Misawa when

he hits the Off-The-Apron Powerbomb because they have teased it in the last two matches that I've seen Misawa in, so maybe that's the key to the Evil One (and all who love stoicism)'s boy. You should go find this baby and watch it already.

Tornado's mask is very Hayabusa-esque but HELL! it still looks like Richard Slinger so how cool can it be?

GAEA CHAMP FORUM- 3/22/97 (GLENN!!!!)

Mayumi Ozaki vs Chigusa Nagayo was pretty good in the ring and really great in the angle department. This is such a beautiful feud and has been set up so well and has created so many good matches that the meeting of the leaders of the two factions HAS to deliver the goods and this one did, though it was a little uneven. It went deeply into history as they started carving each other up (HEY! I watched all those Dump Matsumoto/Chigusa et al matches the last couple days! WOO-HOO! Talk about timing! ROB VVVVVVVVV!!!!!!) to start and then it became feud intensive and was getting really good until.... OZ rips her SUPERCHOICE Daisy Dukes and had to exit the ring and put on some sweatpants (I knew they were TOO good to last) and they had a time getting the steam back up in the match and I think it affected the climax in that the build-up to the final Tequila Sunrise Suplex was not all it could have been. The postmatch made up for any in-ring misfortune that would have marred the occasion- in that not only does Chigusa lose the AAW title, BUT two of her proteges- the SUPERHOT Sakura Hirota and the other Kato (not Sonoko)- join the OZ Academy right their in the ring. GAEA proper is shell-shocked, Chigusa is an emotional wreck, KAORU is enraged with hatred, OZ is being a total bitch, OZ Academy is even stronger, two more youngsters will have to activated into a feud with the two new traitors to Chigusa (my guess is that Matsumoto and Numao will be the defenders of the faith for this lower end aspect of the feud) , and the funnest feud in women's wrestling currently REALLY kicks into gear as the Hot Minky Vixens of OZ Academy get a lot Minkier. WOO-HOO! GAEA RULES!

NEW JAPAN COMMERCIAL TAPE- "Liger vs Muta" (ROB NNNNNN!!!! YOU RULE! Where the hell is he anyway!?!)

-GOD! this match KICKED ASS! This was one of the coolest garbage matches I've seen, as Liger really cuts lose and gets all spooky and weird. This match had a lot of great things in it- including a tope rope diving-plancha-chairshot to the floor by Liger onto Muta, attempted murder by Liger with a big spike, Great Entrances, Great surprises which I won't give away and about everything else you expect from Liger and don't expect from Muta. Not a technical classic by any stretch but truly a great one-off- a freakishly effective triumph of style over substance. To Hell with it- Muta's Gold FacePaint KICKS ASS!

There was also a strangely okay-for-awhile KOJIMA vs TENSAN match. Maybe this Kojima guy is coming around. Tensan still sucks but he is still young, thank garsh.

BIG JAPAN THUMBTRACK BALLOON MATCH Sometime/Somewhere..) (ROB N RULES IT SOO HARD!)

-This was amazing. It might not have been good, but you can't not watch. Kendo Nagasaki pusses out and is out of the ring when the balloons blow thumbtacks all over the ring. Nakamaki is WAY too into it as he rips his shirt off. Nagawussies partner gets DDT'd on the zillion thumbtacks by Axel Rotten and has the thumbtack embedded in his skull. I enjoyed this more than I should have but HELL! that's the way of the world- you plant your flowers and they grow.:)

(Avoid the undercard at all costs!:) except for semi-okay masked pseudolucha guys)

NEXT WEEK: LUCHA! DEAN'S BIRTHDAY WEEKEND OF THE TOP 100 MATCHES OF THE 80's CONTINUES! Whatever else I can get my grubby mitts on!

CHEETAH~!